

**Union Square Civic Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes – 2/10  
Public Safety Building, 6-8 P.M.**

**I. Introduction**

Edward O'Donnell, Director of Economic Development, welcomes and provides overview of the night's meeting.

**II. Update on Response for Qualifications (RFQ)**

- a. O'Donnell explains that the City received 10 responses to the RFQ. All of these responses are now posted on the City's website (refer to Economic Development page – under "Projects" there is an entry to Redevelopment of Union Square, which contains all materials related to the CAC, including the responses to the RFQ).
- b. The Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD) has begun to review the 10 proposals. It looks like 9 of the 10 development teams will be brought before the CAC for interviews and presentations.

**III. CAC Member Introductions**

- a. Per the request of community members, each member of the CAC introduces him/herself.

**IV. SomerVision Presentation**

- a. Brad Rawson of OSPCD provides an overview of SomerVision, the city's long-term comprehensive plan.
- b. SomerVision is an understanding of the city's common goals, values. The SomerVision plan is not regulatory, but advisory—steers the City in various policy directions.
- c. The process was participatory and interdisciplinary. Dozens of public meetings were held and hundreds of public residents attended these meetings to provide feedback.
- d. The SomerVision Steering Committee decided to project real numbers for policy areas, such as amount of open space, new housing units and jobs to be created by 2030. In particular, the Steering Committee decided on a 2:1 ratio for new commercial to housing development in order to correct the city's jobs imbalance.
  - i. SomerVision goals include (by 2030):
    1. 30,000 new jobs
    2. 125 new acres of publicly-accessible open space
    3. 6,000 new housing units, of which 1,200 are permanently affordable
    4. 50% of new trips via transit, bike or walking
    5. 85% of new development in "transformative area" sites (e.g. Assembly Square and Inner Belt—which abuts Union Square)

**V. Transportation and Infrastructure overview**

- a. Hayes Morrison, Director of Transportation and Infrastructure, OSPCD, provides an overview of the Green Line Extension (GLX), roadway and infrastructure improvements underway in Union Square.
- b. The GLX is well underway. In 2012, the City of Somerville signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the MBTA in which the City became responsible for securing two easements for the construction of the new Union Square T Station. The City, through

the Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA), has acquired these properties and relocated the tenants in order to provide the MBTA with the easements.

- c. Streetscape improvements are underway in order to improve transportation issues like traffic and the shift in modes (e.g. increase pedestrian/bicycle traffic).
- d. The City has engaged Parsons Brinkerhoff to begin infrastructure improvements—namely to improve underground infrastructure related to flooding.
- e. Edward O'Donnell adds that the MBTA is in the process of designing the new GLX station. Current design plans provide an option for a developer to build on site. One of the reasons the City would like to engage a Master Developer at this time is so that the Master Developer can take advantage of this option and work with the MBTA to design a mutually-beneficial station.

#### **VI. Zoning Presentation**

- a. Lorri Massa, OSPCD provides an overview of the rezoning of Union Square.
- b. The zoning, Massa explains, serves as the rulebook for development. Zoning guides what can be built and where.
- c. The old zoning impeded development; required many variances and special permits.
- d. In order to reach the new zoning that was passed in 2009, the City held numerous public meetings and focus groups in order to solicit community feedback. The changes include use standards that make the district more pedestrian friendly, and revised parking standards that reflect Union Square as a mixed-use, transit-oriented development.

#### **VII. Union Square Revitalization Plan overview**

- a. Edward O'Donnell, OSPCD, provides an overview of the Union Square Revitalization Plan (the "Plan").
- b. The Plan is an urban renewal plan that serves as a tool to help the City achieve the goals and values outlined in SomerVision.
- c. The Plan looks at seven blocks that are either underutilized or suffer from disinvestment. The Plan outlines desired uses for each of these seven blocks, though this is to serve more as a guideline. It is the City's expectation that a Master Developer will come in to develop all seven of these parcels and mix and match uses in order to achieve the goals outlined in the Plan.
- d. As noted earlier, the Plan seeks to create a 2:1 ratio of commercial to residential uses.
- e. The Plan allows the City to take advantage of various financing options, such as District Improvement Financing (DIF), a tool that was useful in the redevelopment of Assembly Square.
- f. While the Plan allows the City to take properties by eminent domain, it is not the City's intention to do so. The SRA had to take a few of the properties on the Block D-2 in order to provide the MBTA with the easements necessary to build the new GLX station. Otherwise, the City hopes existing property owners will work with the Master Developer to find a mutually-agreeable way to either redevelop their properties or retain their businesses.

#### **VIII. CAC Chairman, Wig Zamore, opens the floor for Q&A.**

- **Q: Will the CAC be given criteria to review responses to the RFQ?**  
A: Yes. The RFQ included the review criteria and it is expected CAC will use these guidelines.
- **Q: How can the City force the developer to stick to their original proposal?**

A: The City intends to sign an agreement regarding the mix of uses, green space, etc. up front; the Master Developer will not be allowed to go outside of these plans. Moreover, the City will sign land disposition agreements with the developer for each individual block. The developer will still be required to go through the same design and public review process for each of these parcels that any other developer be required to do.

- **Q: How does the City advertise Union Square-related meetings?**

A: The City posts meeting notices on the City website, public television, in newspapers and advertises through social media.

**IX. Meeting Schedule**

- a. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 19<sup>th</sup> from 6-8 P.M. at the Argenziano School in Union Square.
- b. After the 2/19 meeting, the CAC will meet in a series of three weekly meetings. At each of these meetings, three of the development teams will present their proposals and answer questions from the CAC. These meetings are TBD. Those who would like to provide input on meetings and times should contact Amanda Maher, Economic Development Specialist, OSPCD at [amaher@somervillema.gov](mailto:amaher@somervillema.gov).
- c. Parsons Brinkerhoff would like to present its infrastructure and roadway improvement plan to the CAC sometime the week of March 24<sup>th</sup>.

**X. Meeting adjourned at 7:58 P.M.**